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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002835

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2017

TAGS: PREL PTER TU IS

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEETING UNNECESSARY DISTRACTION FROM  
PERES/ABU MAZEN SUCCESS

REF: A. ANKARA 2779

1B. ANKARA 2760

1C. SECSTATE 155046

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) Summary and Comment: Despite repeated requests from the international community and the MFA to cancel the conference, Turkish authorities decided to allow the most recent "International Jerusalem Meeting" to occur as scheduled in Istanbul, November 15-17. Speakers advocated the use of violence, and the oral declaration read at the closing session denigrated Zionism and encouraged the type of resistance that has "proven the worthlessness of international conferences held under the auspices of the United States." Turkish media criticized the GOT for allowing the meeting to go forward. The authorities reacted angrily to the juxtaposition at the meeting of photos of President Gul and PM Erdogan alongside a young Palestinian suicide bomber. They apparently decided not to block the conference on the assumption they could control the message, but failed to recognize the implications of engaging the Islamic world's more radical elements. End Summary and Comment.

12. (SBU) The Turkey Voluntary Organization Foundation, an Islamic umbrella group for dozens of "religiously conservative NGOs," hosted the most recent "International Jerusalem Meeting." Most media outlets reported between 3,000 to 3,500 participants, fewer than the 5,000 boasted by the organizers. Attendees reportedly included PM advisor Nabi Avci, Turkey's Islamist Industrialist and Businessmen's Association (MUSAID) Chairman Omer Bolat, OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, former-Lebanese PM Selim al-Hoss, former-Egyptian PM Aziz Siddiqi, former-Iranian PM Seyyid Huseyin Musavi, and Bishop Desmond Tutu. According to the press, many speeches advocated violence and use of force to achieve Palestinian independence. Fatah representatives reportedly protested those speeches and had "harsh discussions" with Hamas members throughout the event.

13. (SBU) Turkish media were sharply critical. Several outlets highlighted questions raised by Arab and Western nations about why the GOT would allow a conference that included Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood representatives to occur. "Hurriyet" Editor-in-Chief Ertugrul Ozkok wrote, "The GOT cannot deny responsibility for a meeting which was held

in a compound owned by the Istanbul Municipality and included participants close to the Prime Minister." Ozkok lamented that, through inaction, the GOT implied tacit support for terrorism -- a decision that could jeopardize international backing for Turkey's fight against the PKK.

14. (S) Contrary to GOT assurances that no statement would result from the conference, participants read an inflammatory declaration during the closing session that was issued in print and on the web --apparently with differing language (ref b). On November 19, the Ambassador spoke with Presidency/PM Foreign Affairs Advisor Davutoglu and MFA U/S Apakan to complain. He highlighted, among other objections, the declaration's language about "Muslim nations under occupation, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia," its invectives against Zionism, and its encouragement of resistance that has "proven the worthlessness of international conferences held under the auspices of the United States." (Note: The sections referring to the U.S. were excised from the declaration's official print version.)

The Ambassador noted he had predicted exactly such a negative outcome in conversations with Apakan and FM Babacan on November 8.

15. (S) Davutoglu said that the assurances about no declaration had been obtained by Palestinian Authority (PA) Ambassador Nabul Maarouf and he had believed this. He had also trusted promises reportedly made by Abu Mazen that Fatah's presence at the conference would negate much of the radicalism. Davutoglu was obviously embarrassed when the Ambassador read some of the offending passages. Apakan agreed that the declaration was unfortunate and reiterated that the GOT had nothing to do with it or the meeting itself.

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At the Ambassador's urging, both agreed to speak with their colleagues about putting out a clear message disassociating the GOT from the declaration and reiterating Turkey's positions on Israeli-Palestinian issues. The MFA subsequently issued a one sentence press release on November 20 noting the Jerusalem Meeting had "nothing to do with either the MFA or any other public institution" -- a rather lame statement, to say the least.

16. (C) PA Ambassador Maarouf told us on November 20 that Abu Mazen had repeatedly asked the GOT to postpone the conference (ref c). Maarouf speculated that the GOT chose not to do so because it believed it "could control the message." Predicting GOT inaction, Abu Mazen contacted the conference organizers directly to request they not allow any fundraising, discussions of internal Palestinian problems, or mention of Annapolis. While Maarouf claimed to have seen the declaration only two hours before the closing session, he reiterated that the PA had worked to guarantee that the issues it deemed important not be raised in the speeches or otherwise. Given the possible alternatives, Maarouf said he was pleased with the outcome.

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